(c) As can be seen from the table above that the forest cover in the country has increased by 36,269 sq.km. in the past 18 years. A good forest cover helps in moderating extremes of the climatic changes.

(d) To further improve the forest cover in the country the following steps have been taken by the Ministry.

1. The Ministry is implementing National Afforestation Programme (NAP) through the Forest Development Agencies (FDA) at the forest division level and the Joint Forest Management Committees at the village level. The progress of NAP scheme as on 15.02.2008 is:

• No. of approved FDA projects:	753
• Cost of the projects (Rs. in crores):	2063.8
• Release made so far (Rs. in crores):	1461.1
• Project Area (million ha):	1.34
• No. of JFM committees (JFMCs):	26772

2. Ministry has launched Grants-in-Aid for Greening India Scheme in Tenth Plan to augment production and use of Quality Planting Material (QPM) so that productivity of public and private land plantations is increased, and individuals and communities are encouraged to take up more tree planting.

3. A new Scheme, Gram Van Yojana (GVY), has been mooted for afforestation on non-forest lands involving PRIs. Scheme to be launched in Eleventh Plan for which an allocation of Rs. 900 crores has been made.

4. New Eco-Task Force (ETF) Battalions of ex-service men are being established in collaboration with the States to regenerate difficult and inaccessible areas. Two new ETF battalions are being raised for Assam during the year.

Level of pollution

†1453. SHRI LALIT KISHORE CHATURVEDI:
DR. GYAN PRAKASH PILANIA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Department of Meteorology of India has conducted a study regarding level of pollution in some cities of India;

(b) whether it is also a fact that after the initial showers of rain, testing done of the sample of water of these cities and nearby areas revealed that levels of sulfer dioxide and nitrogen oxide were high in the water which reach atmosphere through the polluted gases emitted by vehicles, thermal power plants and industries;

(c) whether it is also a fact that chances of catching Alzheimer disease are increased after drinking polluted water or eating vegetables produced by this polluted water; and

(d) if so, the measures taken for checking and eliminating the pollution?

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) and (b) The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) is monitoring rain water quality and long term averages in chemical composition thereof across the country through a network of 10 Global Atmosphere Watch (GAW) stations as per Guidelines of the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO). These GAW stations are located in Allahabad (U.P.), Jodhpur (Rajasthan), Kodaikanal (Kerala), Minicoy (Island in the Arabian Sea), Mohanbari (Assam), Nagpur & Pune (Maharashtra), Portblair (Andeman & Nicobar), Srinagar (J & K) and Visakhapatnam (A.P.)

As per IMD data, precipitation weighted mean sulphate and nitrate concentrations are more in pre-*Monsoon* shower which is attributed to both manmade and natural reasons. These concentrations subsequently decrease as *Monsoon* proceeds.

(c) and (d) Conclusive Impact Assessment Studies of rain water chemistry on ground-water and surface water *vis-a-vis* increase in the rate of occurance of Alzheimer disease as a result thereof are not available.

Various measure taken for checking and eliminating the air pollution are:

- notification of ambient air quality standards and regular monitoring thereof across the country;
- notification of emission standards for various categories of industry including refinery, thermal power plants, etc. and Diesel Generator (DG) Sets;
- regular monitoring of industrial units for compliance of emission standards;
- encouraging cleaner production technologies;
- use of beneficiated coal in thermal power plants;
- notification of mass emission norms for the vehicles at the manufacturing stage;
- improved Pollution Under Control (PUC) Certificate System for in-use vehicles; and
- introduction of clean fuel like LPG/CNG in public transport in selected metro cities.

Construction of road by China

†1454. SHRI SATYAVRAT CHATURVEDI:
SHRI MOTILAL VORA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a road is being constructed by China in the Indian unoccupied area;

(b) whether construction of a metalled road upto the base camp of Everest with a cost of 2 crore dollars is a cause of concern with the security point of view;

(c) whether the Minister of Cultural Affairs in China Shri Sun Zia Zeng has confirmed the continuation of construction work on this 108 km long National Highway;

(d) whether this construction of road would destory the age old ecology of Himalaya; and

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.